

Always By Your Side

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Summary: Hiccup has been seeing a mysterious boy in his dreams lately. Even though he has never met him before, he soon begins to find comfort and respite from his troubled life in him. But there's more to this white-haired stranger than meets the eye. Soul Mate/Guardian Angel AU. Hijack.

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****Author's Note**:** Based on a Tumblr post I came across a while back. More info about the AU (spoilers!) in the Author's Note at the end.

****Disclaimer**:** I do not own Rise of the Guardians or How to Train Your Dragon.

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><p>Always By Your Side

It all started with the dreams.

The first thing that Hiccup noticed about the boy was his hair. It was shorter than his, slightly windswept on one side, and as white as freshly fallen snow. He had the bluest eyes Hiccup had ever seen, twinkling with mischief and matching the smirk on his handsome face.

Some nights, Hiccup saw himself walking hand-in-hand with the mysterious boy. For some reason, his dream-self looked five years older and Hiccup wondered what would possess him to start wearing a braid behind his right ear. But it didn't really matter because whenever he had those dreams, he was only an observer. There were nights when he would watch his dream-self sharing a meal with the white-haired stranger, sometimes catching a movie in the cinema together, or cuddling with him on the couch in his house. It occurred

to him that maybe his mind had conjured up an imaginary boyfriend for him, even though he had only recently started to figure out his own sexual orientation. Everything felt so surreal, as though he was watching a film starring himself as the main actor.

Strangely, Hiccup never seemed to remember those dreams. All he knew was that the white-haired boy had something to do with it. When he did have them, he would instantly be able to recall the familiar settings and immerse himself in whatever scene his sleep cycle decided to treat him with that night, but otherwise everything seemed pretty fuzzy after he woke up. He would find himself unable to pinpoint the reason for leaving his bed feeling so well-rested and inexplicably happy, despite an unexplainable twinge of loss and longing that lurked beneath.

After the second week, Hiccup finally had a name.

He had nearly snorted (if people could snort in their dreams) when he first heard the words 'Jack Frost' slip past his dream-self's lips. Where on earth did his overactive imagination get the idea to set him up with a mythological being? As if getting teased relentlessly for his obsession with dragons and love for fantasy books wasn't enough, he had to dream about going on dates with Old Man Winter as well. It turned out that it was a nickname, as Hiccup discovered a few nights later. The boy's real name was Jackson Overland, and given his fascination with all things winter-related, it wasn't hard to guess where the nickname came from.

The dreams were puzzling, but while Hiccup half expected a mysterious transfer student to his school bearing an uncanny resemblance to Jack (just like in those cheesy romance novels), nothing particularly extraordinary happened, so he simply shrugged them off. Ironically, he had been too caught up in keeping an eye out for the big changes that it took him a few months to start noticing the little subtle shifts in his life.

For one, if he happened to have a bad day at school, it was almost guaranteed that he would wake up the next morning feeling much more refreshed. Hiccup wouldn't be able to recall the dream he had the night before, but something told him that a certain white-haired boy had been in it. He soon began to look forward to them (the dreams, not the bad days), seeking comfort and respite in them when the hours grew dreary, even though as he watched his dream-self chase Jack around or tickle him into tears, he knew he wouldn't remember any of it.

Physical education was still the bane of his existence and he practically sucked at every form of sport on the planet, but when he found himself teetering at the brink of exhaustion, threatening to collapse if he had to run one more lap or dodge another ball, something would keep his legs steady and spur him on, giving him the energy and will to last the remainder of the torturous session. Hiccup attributed it to sheer stubbornness, and he sent a quick prayer of thanks for pure dumb luck when stray projectiles decided to stop magnetizing themselves to his body.

His father was a busy man who worked long hours in his office, giving Hiccup the luxury of having the whole house to himself most days (and nights) of the week. Hiccup was independent and he knew how to take care of himself, but it didn't make cooking and eating alone any more

bearable. There was a picture of his late mother hanging on the wall next to the stairs, and he liked to pretend that the reason he stopped feeling so lonely at home was because she was there to keep him company. If he talked out loud and waited for an answer, he tried to imagine what her voice would sound like and what she would say.

Such were the small strange things that accompanied the mysterious figure in his dreams, and while there was nothing to suggest that they were related, Hiccup had to wonder sometimes.

Things came to an ugly head on a cold, wintery day after school.

Hiccup had his head bowed slightly as his eyes ran over the assignment he had turned in at the start of the semester. It was a report on local and international news, and he trusted his legs to walk him home safely while he read the comments his teacher had left him at the end of the stapled sheets of paper.

A chorus of snickers and heavy footsteps behind him were the only warnings he received before his backpack was torn from his grasp and flung carelessly into somebody's back yard, embedded in the snow. Hiccup grunted as he was shoved none-too-gently onto the ground, and there was the sound of crumpling paper as someone ripped the report from his hand.

"Teacher's pet," Snotlout sneered, glaring at the bright red 'A+' at the top of the front page. "Think you're so smart, huh?"

'Smarter than you, that's for sure,' Hiccup wanted to say, but he wisely kept that to himself, not feeling very enthusiastic about enduring another round of beatings. "Give it back, Snotlout," he sighed instead, picking himself up and reaching for his papers. The brunet quickly found himself in a game of keep away with the group of jocks, who had crushed his report into a paper ball and begun tossing it back and forth between themselves. When Hiccup decided he had enough and tried to leave, they changed tactics and surrounded him, taking turns to push him around.

One particularly rough shove sent Hiccup careening out of the circle when the group parted to let him fall. Fighting to regain his balance, he slipped on a nearby patch of ice and stumbled into the middle of the road.

The jocks' jeers and taunts abruptly turned into shouts of alarm, but Hiccup barely heard them over the deafening horn of the truck speeding towards him. His head snapped towards the rapidly approaching vehicle and his body froze up in fear, preventing him from getting out of the way. He stood there, paralyzed, unable to even scream as his mind raced in panic.

Oh gods no please SOMEBODY HELP ME â€“

Out of nowhere, an invisible force suddenly slammed into Hiccup from the side, knocking the breath out of him and sending him flying out of the truck's path before everything went black as his head collided with the edge of the sidewalk with a sickening _crack_.

* * *

><p>There was someone carding their fingers through his hair, gently massaging his scalp while whispering tenderly to him. Hiccup unconsciously leaned into their touch and sighed in content, prompting the hand to trail downwards and caress the side of his face.<p>

"Hey there, you awake?"

His eyelids fluttered open to see Jack staring worriedly at him, and the other boy's face broke into a relieved smile before he leaned forward to wrap his arms around him in a tight hug. It was only then that Hiccup realized he was lying on a bed with Jack practically half on top of him, but the white-haired teen took great care not to crush him under his weight.

"Am I dreaming?" Hiccup asked after Jack pulled back, earning a light chuckle as he was helped to sit up.

"What makes you say that?"

"You're always there when I'm dreaming, but I don't recognize this place. Where am I?" A quick glance at his surroundings revealed that he was in a sterile white room, and he definitely did not recall ever being in there before.

Jack smiled sadly at him. "What do you remember?"

Frowning, Hiccup thought back as far as he could, trying to recall the events that had led him to this place. He inhaled sharply when an image of a truck flashed in his mind, and he turned to Jack in horror. "Oh gods, am I dead?"

"No," the other boy assured him. "But you're not looking too good either. You hit your head pretty badly."

"Great," Hiccup muttered, dragging a palm down his face. "I'm in a coma talking to my subconscious. Just fantastic."

Jack laughed and reached out to pat his shoulder. "Oh, I'm not your subconscious. I have no idea where that guy ran off to, but he shouldn't be far."

There was a heavy pause.

"Who are you?" Hiccup drew back abruptly, as if seeing Jack for the first time. His instincts told him that the white-haired teen could be trusted, but he could still sense that something wasn't quite right. "Why are you in my dreams? And how is it that I can talk to you now?"

The gentle smile on Jack's face fell away as he turned his gaze towards the window next to the bed. He was silent for a long time, and a sinking feeling began to pool in Hiccup's stomach at the look of utter sorrow on his face.

"Jack, say something. What aren't you telling me?"

"Do you believe in angels, Hiccup?" Jack suddenly asked, refusing to meet Hiccup's eyes. "Soul mates, destiny, that kind of thing."

"I don't know, maybe? What does that have to do with this?"

"Remember that newspaper report you did?" he continued without answering. "The one you were holding when Snotlout and his friends ganged up on you?"

It was completely off topic and Jack was beginning to frustrate him with more questions, but Hiccup wasn't about to stop him now that he'd started to talk. "Yeah, what about it?"

"You used an article from Burgess's local news. Do you remember what it was?"

"Not really. I wrote that report months ago, how am I supposed to..."

Jack reached beneath his pillow and pulled out a stapled set of papers. The brunet took one glance at it and immediately recognized his handwriting on the front, and he realized that he was staring at a fresh copy of his assignment, lacking any traces of ever having been crushed or crumpled. Jack handed it over with a nod, and Hiccup took his cue to flip though the report, searching for the article in question.

'_Teen Drowns in Lake_,' the headlines read, and the words below detailed the story of the brave boy who had given his life to save his sister from the cracking ice in late winter. There was a picture of a boy smiling cheekily at the side, and while he had brown hair and chocolate colored eyes, it was unmistakably Jack's face who was looking back at him.

"Remember when I started to appear in your dreams?" Jack asked quietly, watching closely as Hiccup made the connection between the boy in the article and the one sitting in front of him.

"A few days after I handed this in," Hiccup whispered, still trying to wrap his head around the fact that he had been dreaming of a dead person whom he'd never met before in his life. He looked up and frowned at Jack in confusion. "I don't understand. Why me?"

Jack's face was a picture of forlorn resignation. "They say that everybody has a soul mate in life. Two halves of a whole," he explained with a sad smile. "But if either one of them dies before the other, he or she would become their destined partner's guardian angel. Those dreams you've been having? They're what could have been, had I not died."

Stunned into speechlessness, Hiccup could only stare at Jack until understanding clicked in his mind. "You've been watching over me," he gasped in realization, finally making sense of all the strange little things that had been happening to him. "Helping me in gym class, keeping me company at home, and when that truck was about to hit me!" He trailed off uncertainly at the guilt that flashed across the other boy's face.

"I didn't mean to put you in a coma. All I knew was that I couldn't let you die, and I acted without thinking," Jack shook his head regretfully before quirking a half-smile at the brunet. "Your mum

says 'hi' by the way, and as much as she loves you, I don't think she would appreciate seeing you so soon."

The mention of his mother brought tears to Hiccup's eyes and the next thing he knew, he was sobbing pathetically into Jack's shoulder, clinging onto him tightly as the white-haired teen stroked his hair and rubbed his back. For some reason, he felt completely at ease with Jack, almost as if he'd known him his whole life, and there wasn't an ounce of shame or embarrassment in breaking down in front of him.

"Shh shhâ€| Oh Hiccup, I'm so sorry for upsetting youâ€|" Jack whispered soothingly, trying to comfort the boy in his arms by pressing an apologetic kiss to his temple. "Everything will be alright, you'll see. Things will change after you wake up."

"If I can only see you in my dreams, then let me sleep forever," Hiccup protested with a fervent shake of his head against Jack's blue hoodie. "I don't want to go back, not when I can have you here."

"It'll get better, I promise. Please don't give up now," Jack encouraged as he pulled back from the hug. He lifted Hiccup's chin with two fingers and smiled at him with all the love in his heart. "Remember, I'm always by your side. I'll be with you, even if you can't see me."

Hiccup nodded tearfully and closed his eyes as Jack leaned in, whispering a tender "I love you" before their lips met.

When he opened his eyes again, Jack was gone.

There was a sharp beeping sound next to him and an IV drip connected to his arm. Hiccup found himself lying on a bed in a hospital ward, and though it was the exact same room as the one in his dream, he knew that Jack had been there from the lingering warmth on his lips, tingling with the echoes of soft pressure against them.

Across the room, his father sat slumped in a chair, fast asleep, and Hiccup smiled at the sight as a stray breeze from the window drifted in and ruffled his hair.

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><p>Author's Note: Soulmate/Guardian Angel AU - Someone wrote about a scenario where every person in the world has a soul mate, but if either one of them died before meeting the other, they would become their partner's guardian angel and protect them to make sure they are able to live the long and happy lives that they themselves were deprived of.

I sure hope I didn't botch that wonderful idea with this fic. Thanks for reading!

P.S. Anyone caught that Land Before Time quote I threw in there?
:P

End
file.